

# Tibetan Nuns Project

Fall 2001

## A Strong Voice for Nuns' Education

*Director Rinchen Khando Choegyäl*

Interview by Betsy Biggs



*Rinchen Khando Choegyäl is the Director of TNP, as well as the Minister of Education in the Tibetan Government of Exile in India. She was the first President of the Tibetan Women's Association. She is married to Ngari Rinpoche, youngest brother of His Holiness the Dalai Lama. This year, after completing the maximum two terms as Minister of Education allowed by Tibetan law, she will devote herself full-time to improving the lives and education of nuns through her position as Director of the Tibetan Nuns Project.*

### **What were your thoughts when you started the Tibetan Nuns Project?**

When we started TNP in 1987, I thought, "How best to look after the nuns?" Of course the most important thing was to find them food, clothing, shelter and medical attention. It is, however, not enough to be fed and clothed. I knew nuns needed a better system of education, and that is what we have tried to focus on throughout the history of TNP.

Upon arriving in Dharamsala, 99% of the nuns could neither read nor write. They appeared to be strong young women, but in the classroom it was as if they were in kindergarten. Now there are nuns at both Dolma Ling and Shugsep who are beginning advanced studies. Eventually I hope that the Dolma Ling Institute for Higher Learning will be a place where both nuns and lay women can receive the finest advanced studies in all of the Tibetan Buddhist traditions.

### **Why is it important for nuns to be well educated?**

After His Holiness came to India, he put the education of children, not just boys, on top of his priority list. So, today in the Tibetan community the young men and women are equally educated. Traditionally in Tibet there has been a very profound system of monastic education which was, however, restricted to monks. Women who decided to become nuns focused mainly on learning prayers and how to read and write Tibetan. Now that education in the lay community has become equal between men and women, I personally feel that we must restructure the nuns' education in order to stay true to His Holiness' vision. It is important for this vision of equality to trickle down into all parts of society.

So the key is to educate the nuns in a system through which they can study at as high a level as they need to. Luckily, we have full support for this vision from His Holiness and from the Department of Religious and Cultural Affairs. Now the question is, what is the best way to implement this system for the nuns?

My main vision for TNP is an education that will enable the nuns to think for themselves, to learn deeper values like: what is most meaningful at the end of your life? It will not be easy because they are not used to thinking for themselves or thinking highly of themselves.

### **Do the nuns receive the same education as monks?**

In principle, the monks' education is the same as the education we have implemented at our nunneries. The only difference (and this is changing at the monasteries now, too) is that a traditional monastic education teaches only Buddhist philosophy and Tibetan reading and writing. We also teach the nuns other subjects — English, history, math. Again, we are trying to implement the vision of His Holiness, who has stressed the importance of learning these things.

# Tibetan Nuns Project

Established in 1987, the Tibetan Nuns Project provides education and support to approximately 500 nuns in five different nunneries in northern India. The Project is dedicated to:

*Improving standards of food, sanitation, medical care, basic education and training in existing nunneries.*

*Working towards future self-sufficiency through innovative educational opportunities.*

*Establishing further facilities for refugee Buddhist nuns.*

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## What is the role of women's education in current Tibetan society?

Education is very, very important for any community. Women are particularly important because through them the whole community can be educated (whether they are mothers and wives or nuns teaching in the community). Also, spiritual values are precious to everyone — mothers as well as nuns. There is a terrible lack of opportunity for lay women to engage in spiritual study right now. If a lay woman is able to study, she will be able to affect her whole family. Eventually, some percentage of admission to the Institute for Higher Learning will be reserved for lay women.

## Why is the Institute for Higher Learning a non-sectarian institution?

The main reason is that I feel that all the different traditions of Tibetan Buddhism boil down to the same thing, the same message from the Buddha. We are so used to belonging to one tradition or another. This can cause division as religion often does. I have the deepest respect for all traditions. I want the nuns to learn all of the traditions in order for them to get a richer education. All of the different traditions really help you in different ways to reach a high level.

## Will the nuns develop "self-sufficiency"?

It is important for the Tibetan nation to be self-sufficient. The rest of the world has been very generous in supporting us in exile, but we need to try our best to attain self-sufficiency. We can't just sit back and relax and say, "How nice, we are being supported." We have to look at these issues: who has which skills, and how can they best work together?

The purpose of life — whether as a lay person, monk or nun — is to develop yourself as an individual and to become a useful, productive member of human society — helpful and altruistic. We have started to develop an advanced educational system for the nuns, but not all will be scholars; some nuns will need training of other kinds. All of them have something to give. I want to set up a system where they can be trained as health workers, teachers, midwives, artists, people with skills to offer the community. The nuns could even keep cows. Self-sufficiency should be stressed within each part of society, as well as within the larger society.

The basic requirements for real altruism are care and compassion. But you also need to have some skill. Not everyone can be a teacher, but everyone can develop some skills so that they can serve the community. And by doing so, the nuns will be truly living compassion. Altruism starts at home, with the person next to you. Many people care deeply about the environment, or people far away, yet don't pay much attention to the people close to them. Even nuns can't pray for all sentient beings and do nothing themselves. Knowing how diligent they have been at their studies, I am certain that they will be equally diligent in serving their communities when they are finished.

## What do you see as the future of the Tibetan Nuns Project?

We've come a long way in terms of infrastructure, health, and awareness. We started Dolma Ling and Shugsep nunneries, and we also help nuns at Geden Choeling, Tilokpur and other nunneries. Over the next five years, my focus will be on the quality of the nuns' education and administration. I want to review each and every nun and see what each nun is capable of. I want the administration to become even more efficient. But primarily I want to focus on the quality of the nuns' education and to help develop them individually.

We have a long way to go in terms of fundraising. It is crucial that we build an endowment so that Dolma Ling's operating expenses can become self-sufficient. Of course, we also need to complete the planned infrastructure of Dolma Ling, as well as build the new Shugsep Nunnery. On top of all this, we need to figure out the best way to incorporate the number of nuns arriving fresh from Tibet each year into our system.

Through TNP, I would like to see that I look after all of the nuns in the Tibetan community. This is probably impossible! The TNP is currently helping more than 600 nuns and, at least, I want to see that this job is done correctly in terms of education and social work.

Since 1987, I have worked very hard to improve the lives of nuns. Although I have not received any external reward, it has given me great internal joy. I think through this project I have gained more than anybody in the world.

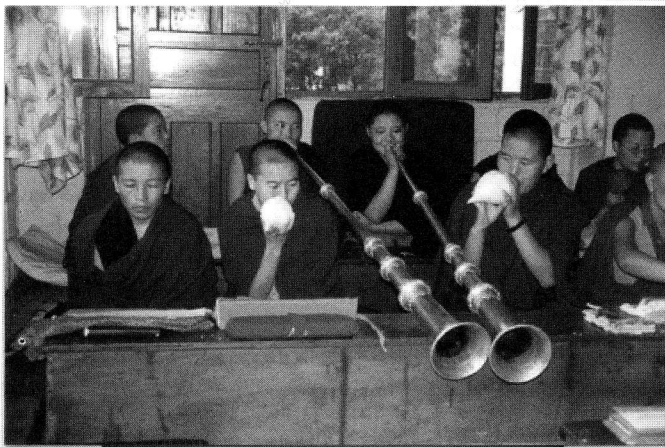
*Rinchen Khando will make a speaking tour in the U.S. from mid-October to mid-November. For more information on events in your area, or how to help go to [www.tnp.org](http://www.tnp.org).*

## Advanced Study Program For Shugsep Nuns

### Forty Nuns Receive Initiation

This past March forty Shugsep nuns journeyed to Namdroling Monastery in Byalukuppe, South India to receive the Rinchen Terdzod empowerment from Penor Rinpoche, the head of this Monastery and one of the most important Nyingma lamas. This empowerment is a key initiation for the nuns as it marks the opening of the door to Nyingma tantric training. The initiation took three months, and the focus was on meditation practice and prayers. Now these nuns can practice the entire Nyingma terma tradition. Twelve nuns stayed behind to help maintain the nunnery and to attend teachings from His Holiness The Dalai Lama's spring teachings. They were given special teachings by their head teacher Sonam Wangchuk

on two important practice texts. They also received training in creating "torma", ritual butter sculptures, and the use of ritual musical instruments.



### Nuns Advance in Study Program

An unprecedented number of nuns are working towards the highest achievement in Nyingmapa scholarship, the Khenpo degree. A nun's education at Shugsep begins with four years of training in Madhyamika, or Lower Sutrayana, the basis of Buddhist studies. The nuns also study Tibetan reading and writing, as well as English. Completion of this first four-year program is equivalent to a secondary school degree. There are now sixteen nuns at this level of study. The next two years are spent studying the Prajnaparamita, or Upper Sutrayana. While studying Tibetan and English, they also teach Buddhist Philosophy to the nuns in years 1-4, giving them valuable teaching experience. These studies are the equivalent of a B.A. Finally years 7, 8 and 9 are spent studying the inner and outer tantras. The nine Shugsep nuns at this level are the first nuns in the Nyingma tradition to reach this level of tantric studies, the completion of

which is equivalent to a M.A.

Nuns who complete all nine years of the Nyingma training may go on to do research in the subject of their choice and then are given a Khenpo degree, which is equivalent to a Ph.D. in Tantric Philosophy. These nuns will be able to give the full Nyingma teachings to other monks and nuns.

Of course, not all nuns will advance to the full Nyingma education. Many choose to concentrate on meditation practice instead of scholarly studies. In fact, twelve Shugsep nuns are on meditation retreats in Nepal, which will last up to six years. Many also choose to go on long retreats after finishing the nine-year course.

### Khenpo Pema Sherap Tantric Teachings

In July, Khenpo Pema Sherap, a high lama and the head of Namdroling Monastery Shedra, South India, arrived to give the top three classes of the Shugsep nuns one month

Tantra. It is a great honor that he is introducing the top class of nuns to tantric teachings. Sonam Wangchuk particularly requested him to come teach the nuns because the teacher/disciple relationship is so important in tantric teachings and now they can begin these teachings in the best possible way.

### Land Purchased for New Shugsep Nunnery

Our most exciting news is that we are close to finalizing the purchase of four acres to build the new Shugsep Nunnery. The current nunnery is overcrowded and many of the buildings are in poor condition. What finally made the current site of Shugsep impossible was the total collapse of a nearby hillside that swept away the motorable road access. It has taken a long time to find a suitable new piece of land, but we are hopeful that this purchase will finally allow us to start building a place for the Shugsep nuns to practice in decent and safe quarters. The plan will include simple but well-planned accommodation for one hundred eight nuns and their teachers.

## A Nun's Story

Dolma Lhamo, a 28-year-old nun who lives in Shugsep, was born in Amdo, Tibet. She was eleven when she took ordination against the wishes of her parents. She took her vows at Sertok, the hermitage of Khenpo Jigme Phuntsok. After several years, she went on a pilgrimage to Lhasa with six other people. En route, they were arrested by the Chinese and put into prison. Prison life was very difficult and Dolma Lhamo was not allowed to pray or practice her religion. After six months and fourteen days, she and a friend managed to escape. They made it to Lhasa, and then took a jeep to Tashilunpo Monastery, near Shigatse. From here, they walked to the border.

They had no money, no shoes, no food and very little clothing. They could not ask anyone for help, as large amounts of money were offered for the return of escaped prisoners. For seven days they didn't eat. Finally, near Sakya, they met an old man who helped them to get clothes, shoes and food. He also brought them wigs made from yak hair to disguise the fact that they were nuns and showed them the path they needed to take. They walked for many days, and finally made it to the border of Sikkim.

Dolma Lhamo and her friend spoke an Amdo dialect rather than the Tibetan spoken in Lhasa or the south of Tibet, so the authorities in Sikkim were suspicious. Since to their ears, the women spoke no Tibetan, Hindi, or English, they concluded they were Chinese spies. For two years they stayed in a terrible prison with murderers and other criminals, in a single room with very little food and no toilet. Upon their release, they were taken back to the Chinese border, where the monastery at the Tibetan refugee camp came to their rescue. The monks took them by jeep to Kalimpong, and paid their passage to Dharamsala.

They had no food and nowhere to stay, and the Reception Center was closed temporarily. Then Dolma Lhamo met an old man who found a place for the nuns to stay and got them food. When the Reception Center reopened, newcomers had a chance to have an audience with H.H. the Dalai Lama. She went, and he told her to go to Shugsep, where she could continue to practice in the Nyingma tradition. After first being told that there was no room, she persisted and finally the Tibetan Nuns Project found her a place at Shugsep. After many years of hardship, she had found a place to call home.

## News From Dolma Ling

### A Major Building Completed

The centerpiece of Dolma Ling, the Assembly Building, has had the finishing touches put on it and is now in use. This building was funded by the Heinrich Böll Foundation of Germany. However, funding ran out before it was entirely furnished, and hence we have been seeking help to complete it.

The new temple combines the best of old and new with good fans and modern light fittings, as well as plenty of natural light. There are wood floors to protect the health of the nuns, who spend hours at a time sitting in the temple chanting prayers. A large appliqué thangka portraying Shakyamuni Buddha, Avalokiteshvara, and Green Tara is the centerpiece. The temple was inaugurated on September 20, 2000 during the opening ceremony of the annual Jang Gonchoe month-long debate session, in which nuns from four nunneries gathered to further their understanding of Buddhist philosophy. A recent generous donation from Mr. Gene Lin and the Compassion and Wisdom Buddhist Association in Southern California is enabling us to complete the final details.

Thanks to the help of many, including the Heinrich Böll Foundation, the Tibetan Women's Association of Switzerland, a generous Japanese donor, the Lolwe Foundation of Denmark, and the hard work of TNP staff, our library is finally complete! This has been a huge, ongoing project. More than two thousand books, in both Tibetan and English, have had to be categorized, labeled, and physically transferred to their new wood and glass bookcases. The whole collection of books has been entered into a computer in Tibetan, using software specially developed for that purpose by Anything Mac Pvt Ltd. of Delhi. The library itself has been outfitted with tables, desks, and chairs and is now a comfortable place for the nuns to do research and study.

We have also just about completed our large lecture hall where all the nuns can gather for lectures and other presentations.

Lastly, Dolma Ling has entered the 21st century with the completion of our computer room! The Heinrich Böll Founda-

tion provided three iMacs plus one for the library, while a donation by Josephine Evans of Chicago, Illinois enabled us to purchase ergonomic computer tables that arrived in mid-July as well as an additional computer. In the coming year, the Dolma Ling nuns will be receiving computer training in order to take advantage of these computers and hope to start producing their own internal newsletter.

### Gardening Continues

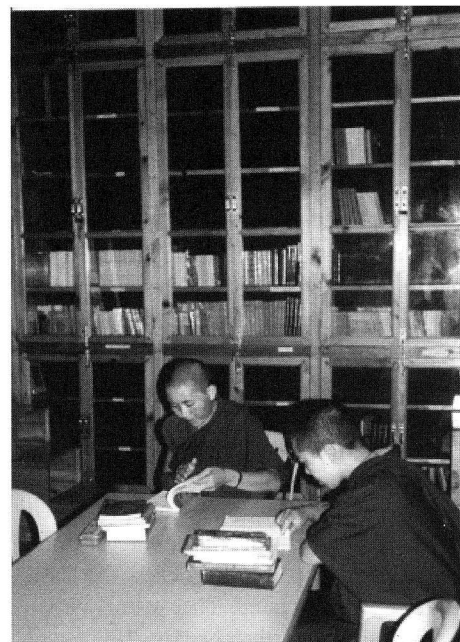
Last fall, nuns worked hard to ensure a blooming garden for the spring. They enriched the soil with manure and compost. Many bulbs were planted, along with a few vegetables. The reward was a large harvest of gladioli which we sold in the spring, as well as a bumper crop of potatoes that the nuns are currently enjoying. We are thankful to Matthew Riley and to Lou Dobbs of the Global Peace Foundation for helping us with this project.

### Solar Hot Water System Installed

Many of our nuns continue to experience health problems, and we have been actively searching for ways to improve their living conditions. One large step was to install a solar hot water system in the Dolma Ling kitchen. The system has markedly improved kitchen hygiene by making it easy for to wash pots, dishes, cutlery and hands with hot water, thereby reducing the chances of contamination. It's also reduced gas and firewood consumption as large pots can now be filled with hot water that is close to boiling. We are happy to have found a solution which is not only ecologically friendly, but economical and incredibly useful. Our grateful thanks to Adam Yauch and family for funding this invaluable addition to Dolma Ling.

### Dolma Ling in the Year Ahead

As the central part of the Dolma Ling complex, the completion of the Assembly Building has been very important. The nuns move comfortably between the prayer hall, library, study, and their rooms, which are snug and protected from the monsoon rains and winter chill. The complex fits very nicely into its environment, as grassy banks, gardens



*Dolma Ling nuns studying in the new library.*

and stone steps surround the buildings, while rice paddies and mountains form the backdrop. There is a feeling of excitement in the air, a sense that the overall project is nearly complete. We are getting close, but we're not finished yet — as always, work continues.

Our most pressing of need is the construction of the sixth and last major wing of Dolma Ling. We urgently need the six classrooms that this building will provide — so much so that we have decided to build a three-story structure, instead of the two-story one we originally planned. We feel so strongly about the need for this building that we are continuing construction, though we do not currently have funding. Once construction has been halted, it is very difficult to start up again, and so we are hoping that some of you will consider helping us out with this essential building of Dolma Ling.

Two final buildings still need to be constructed. One is a unit with housing for our ever-increasing staff, some of whom are currently crammed into rooms built for other purposes. The other will be our administrative offices as well as a receiving area for guests and visitors.

We have been down a long road in the creation of Dolma Ling, and now we are close to reaching our goal. We thank you all for your continuing help in transforming our dream into reality.

## News from Tilokpur

### Tilokpur Nuns Seek To Raise Funds for New Construction

Last year, Tilokpur Nunnery bought a piece of land close to their existing nunnery to build a new study center. The land for this project has been purchased and fenced off, but in order to begin construction, the Tilokpur nuns will need to raise much more money. They have now organized a building fund and started their major fundraising in April when two of the most senior nuns visited Taiwan for three months. The nuns did puja (prayers) at the homes of donors but their fundraising was hampered by their lack of Chinese and inability to translate their brochure into Chinese. However, they hope that the relationships begun during this fundraising trip will help them in the future.

### Tilokpur Teachers and Study Program

Once the assembly hall is finished, Tilokpur will institute a nine-year Kagyu study program, similar to Shugsep's nine-year Nyingma program. They are being assisted in their plans by Tai Situ Rinpoche. The nuns are learning Tibetan reading and writing and English. Their Tibetan teacher is a nun who has just graduated from a four year training course in Tibetan. We are very pleased to have placed our first nun teacher.

## New Classrooms at Geden Choeling

We are pleased to report that the construction at Geden Choeling has been finished. The living quarters and classrooms are being happily used by the nuns. The two existing classrooms at Geden Choeling were terribly overcrowded and leaky, making it impossible for the nuns to carry on a proper program of study. Now four new classrooms are full of nuns busily writing in Tibetan, and practicing English conversation.

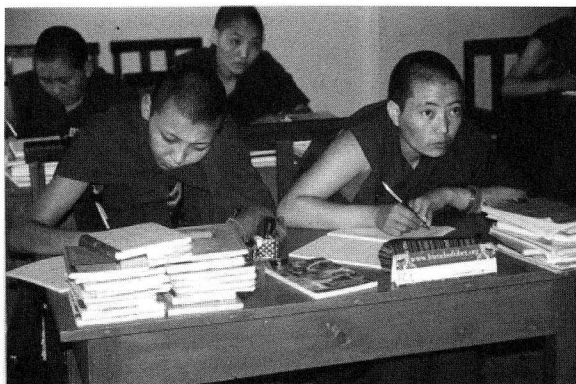
Geden

Choeling is the oldest nunnery in Dharamsala, predating the Tibetan Nuns Project by more than fifteen years. Rather than being built with a central plan, it grew little by little as nuns arrived and built their own shelters—some of which, due to the climate in this area have become rundown and leaky. While nuns have traditionally been sponsored by their families, the current reality is that most nuns are recent Tibetan refugees who arrive penniless.

Planning the new structure was a challenge, as the architect had to work within a tight space bounded by the existing buildings. The construction included the installation of septic

tanks with good filters. The new building sits atop the patch of land, overlooking the smaller shelters, and provides four spacious classrooms with natural light and good ventilation, solidly built desks and chairs and large blackboards in each room as well as housing for thirty nuns.

The classrooms were funded by the organization Operation A Day's Work in Norway, initiated by the Norwegian Tibet Committee Women's Group. Funding for the housing portion of the building came from a



variety of sources: Geden Choeling itself, the Tibetan Nuns Project, and a generous gift from Geshe Tsultrim Gyaltzen and Thupten Dhargyey Ling of part of the proceeds from His Holiness the Dalai Lama's teachings in Los Angeles in June, 2000.

The nuns are very happy with their new classrooms. Tenzin Kunsang, who has been at Geden Choeling since 1985, says that her favorite thing about the classrooms is that they have nice light. She also says "Before, the classrooms had a lot of water coming in while the new ones are dry. There is space so it is much easier to study."

## Health Book for Tibetan Nuns

Marlies Bosch from the Netherlands and the Global Fund for Women have joined together to help the Tibetan Nuns Project translate relevant chapters of the groundbreaking women's health book "Our Bodies, Our Selves" into Tibetan and Ladakhi. Bosch, a Dutch photographer and journalist did workshops on women's health issues with Ladakhi nuns last year, wrote the grant, and the Global Fund for Women donated \$10,000 to fund the translation and publication of the book. Also part of the grant was an additional \$5,000 to train nuns in Ladakh to teach other nuns basic concepts of women's health.

From the time "Our Bodies, Our Selves" was first published by the Boston's Women Health Collective (BWHC) in

1970, women from many different countries have been inspired to produce their own versions of the book. There are currently nineteen translations or adaptations available in places such as Latin America, India, South Africa and Thailand, and more are on the way.

In June, TNP Co-Director Lobsang Dechen traveled to Holland to join women from several countries in discussing the cross-cultural issues affecting the book's translation and adaptation to a non-Western audience. Once the publication is complete, it will help the nuns to become more self-sufficient in matters of health, as well as helping them with specific medical problems.

## Water System Helps Out

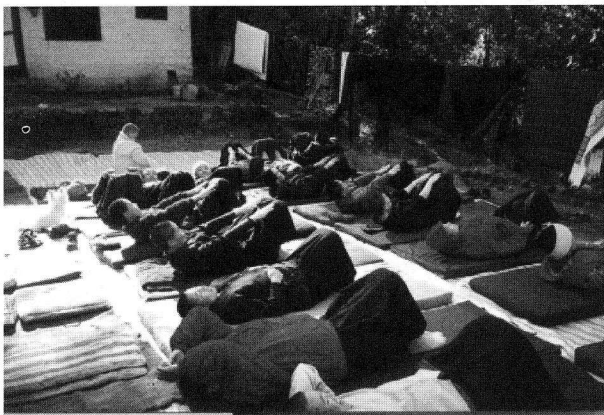
The water system at Dolma Ling, which purifies and chlorinates water through a sophisticated system of filters, became a source of help to the community in March, as a scarcity of water swept the Dharamsala area, disrupting everyday life. Simultaneously, thousands of people had come to the area to receive teachings from His Holiness the Dalai Lama! Dolma Ling was fortunate to have adequate water due to our treatment and storage system, and so we were able to donate water to Thekchen Choeling, the main temple where the teachings were held. Two trunks carrying large plastic tanks went up and down between McLeod Ganj and Dolma Ling three times a day for the duration of the teachings.

## Workshops For Nuns

### Health Worker Training

In January, Ms. Susan Arndt, a nurse from Alaska, conducted a basic health worker training. Ten nuns participated, from Dolma Ling, Shugsep, Tilokpur, and Geden Choeling — four new nuns and six with previous health worker training and experience. The course focused on adding to the knowledge base of the experienced health workers, while introducing the new nuns to the basic ideas of health care and the clinic

process. The book "Where There Is No Doctor" was used as a primary text. After finishing the course, Susan also helped with the gardening and paper-making projects for which we are very grateful.



Shugsep nuns practicing back exercises

### Computers

With the near completion of our computer room and its three iMacs, four of the Dolma Ling nuns were able to take part in a computer workshop in late January through early February. They were trained in the basics of the Macintosh operating system as well as in the use of basic word processing software.

### Office Skills

Also in February, a ten day administrative

training workshop offered ten nuns from four nunneries instruction in basic office skills, such as filing, telephone manners, project organization, typing, and fax. It is important for some of the nuns to learn these skills so that they can be more self-sufficient in the future.

### Therapeutic Massage

Finally, in April, Dr. Judith O. Weaver took time out of her busy schedule in the U.S.

to travel to Dolma Ling for her fourth training session in therapeutic massage. She spent five days with the nuns following up on the training she had given in previous years. She also visited each of

the other nunneries. Dr. Weaver was pleasantly surprised at the eagerness and inquisitiveness of the nuns towards the training -- a significant change from the hesitation first expressed by the nuns during the initial training. Massage training is very helpful in treating eye, stomach, and back problems due to stress and long periods of sitting and studying; the massage also helps their general health and immune systems. The nuns expressed their thanks to Dr. Weaver, for her commitment to teaching massage.

## TNP Support Tour 2001



Director Rinchen Khando Choegyal and Co-Director Elizabeth Napper will visit the US from mid-October to mid-November 2001, to enlist support for TNP. They will visit several destinations around the US to give a compelling visual presentation.

The funds raised from this tour will make a significant difference and direct impact on the lives of the nuns, by finishing Dolma Ling and beginning the building of Shugsep. The goal is to raise \$100,000.

Organizing these support events cannot happen without the help of generous volunteers and sponsors. Please look below for event locations and come join us! Spread the word, tell your friends and come show your support for TNP and meet the women who provided the vision and motivation behind this important work for the nuns.

We also need volunteers to help with events in each location and sponsors to defray the costs of travel. If you or someone you know would be interested in this please contact us immediately at (510) 647-3423.

For up-to-date information, please check out our website at: <http://www.tnp.org>.

### Tour locations:

- Bay Area      October 12-17  
November 4-12
- Los Angeles      October 18-22
- Chicago      October 23-24
- Boulder      October 25
- Colorado Springs      October 26-28
- Twin Cities      October 29-Nov. 3
- Portland, OR      November 13-14

***Come to a TNP event  
in your area this fall!***

## Sponsoring Staff Children

At Dolma Ling, nine teachers and eleven staff members work hard to ensure that the nuns have a good education, a peaceful place in which to practice their religion, and a quiet, safe environment in which to study and live. From the construction staff to the accountant, the philosophy teacher to the night watchman, the office manager to the jeep driver, the math teacher to the site engineer, everyone at Dolma Ling should be thanked and congratulated for their hard work.

Since salaries are low, one of the benefits we provide to our staff is the payment of educational expenses for a child. We are currently seeking sponsors for our staff children; just \$30 per month will allow a child to attend school full-time. There are twelve children aged 5 weeks to 16 years, and only two are currently being sponsored. Please consider sponsoring a child so that our staff children can receive an education as good as the one that their parents are helping the nuns to receive.

## News from the U.S. TNP Office

### TNP Website Up and Running

The Tibetan Nuns Project is proud to announce our new website at [www.tnp.org](http://www.tnp.org). You can read up-to-date information and see pictures of our projects and nunneries, or find out what you can do to help. You can also make donations and pay your sponsorship online. Check it out and let us know what you think... and send the link to your friends! TNP would like to especially thank Grace de la Flor, Mary Wald and Angela Kang, as well as Paras Dagli and CharityFocus.org, for all of their work in creating our beautiful new site.

### TNP T-Shirts Available

We now have TNP T-shirts and sweatshirts for sale! All feature the unique TNP Sanskrit logo in gold. Short sleeve t-shirts come in regular (maroon) and women's scoop neck (twilight blue). The sweatshirts come in crew neck and zipped hooded in maroon, black. Sizes S - XL. T-shirts: \$15. Crew: \$30 and hooded: \$45. Please add 8.25% sales tax in CA and \$5 shipping per item. To order, send check or visa/mastercard to the TNP Berkeley office, with complete mailing information, phone number, size, color, and style.

### New Sponsorship Coordinator

After a year of volunteering as TNP Sponsorship Coordinator, Allyson West, is now turning over her position to Sheila Martin Chan. We have greatly appreciated Allyson's incredible energy and time, amidst an already busy life. Thank you Allyson! Sheila has taken on not only sponsorship, but processing donations and sales as well. Sheila received her MA in East-West psychology at California Institute of Integral Studies, has studied several different languages including Italian, Mandarin and Cantonese and in addition teaches ESL for adults.

*Fundamental to every world religion is the belief that we must reduce our selfishness and serve others.*

*HH Dalai Lama*

*The Gethsemani Encounter, 1996*



### Two invaluable board members resign: Dianne Armer and Carroll Johnson

May of 2001 saw the resignation of two wonderful board members, Dianne Armer and Carroll Johnson. Dianne and Carroll joined the TNP Board of Directors in May of 1999 and were instrumental in establishing the Berkeley US office and creating the Development Director position, now filled by Meg Moser.



*Dianne (upper), Carroll (lower)*



Carroll served not only as the Treasurer, and revised our financial system, but mentored Meg as they created a systematic program of fundraising goals and plans for the Tibetan Nuns Project. While they remain committed to the work of TNP, Carroll looks forward to having time to complete her novel (with a Tibetan theme) and Dianne to building her new business of financial consulting. The Tibetan Nuns Project is indebted to Dianne and Carroll for the great amount of time and energy that they gave to the Project and staff, to say nothing of essential financial support. We wholeheartedly thank Dianne and Carroll for their dedicated service to TNP!

## You Can Help

The Tibetan Nuns Project could not continue to provide food, housing, medical care and education for so many nuns were it not for the help of our volunteers, sponsors and donors. We are very grateful to everyone who has helped us over the years. We are often asked by people how they can best support us, and so we've created this resource detailing our current needs. If you'd like to help, please call our office at (510) 647-3423 or email: [tnpusa@igc.org](mailto:tnpusa@igc.org).

\* **Make a Donation:** Your donation will be used for education, medical care, and basic living expenses for the nuns, to complete the building of Dolma Ling and to build a new home for the nuns at Shugsep.

You may stipulate that your gift address a specific need. You can make a donation by contacting our Berkeley or Dharamsala offices, or online at our website at [www.tnp.org](http://www.tnp.org).

\* **Sponsor a Nun:** Thirty U.S. dollars (\$30) a month provides basic necessities for one nun living in exile (for more than 500 nuns living in five nunneries: Geden Choeling, Tilokpur, Dolma Ling, Shugsep, a few at the new Sakya Nunnery in Rajpur) representing all religious orders of the Tibetan Buddhist tradition as well as nuns living on their own and in retreat. Sponsors are asked to commit to at least one year. A reminder notice will be sent one month prior to your next payment. Sponsors receive a sponsorship packet with a photobio of a nun and are welcome to correspond with her.

\* **Help Us With Our Wish List:** Some of our office equipment is old and obsolete, so any help would be much appreciated. It can be used equipment, but no less than two years old. We need:

- Apple (Macintosh) iBook
- Scanner for Macintosh;
- Slide projector and screen
- 2 digital cameras

\* **Distribute Our Goods:** Each year, TNP independently produces and distributes a yearly wall calendar. We also sell T-shirts, sweatshirts, cards and our video. The majority of our sales rely on individual distributors to friends, local bookstores and dharma centers.



## Tibetan Nuns Project

2288 Fulton St. #312  
Berkeley, CA 94704  
(510) 647-3423

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\* **Host a Gathering:** We have produced our first video that narrates the flight of the nuns out of Tibet and the work of the Project. Hosting a video showing in your home is a simple and personal way to raise interest about the nuns. You could also provide TNP literature at events in your area which attract people who would be interested in TNP. We provide you with all necessary materials.

\* **Volunteer at our Berkeley Office:** Every Wednesday from 10-12 a.m. is an open volunteer time. The second Wednesday of every month from 6:30 - 9:00 PM is a work party. Tasks might include helping with mailings, database entry, or creating artwork. If you don't live in the Bay Area, but are in town on business, this is a great opportunity to meet us. Please call or email for directions.

We also need volunteers skilled in:

\* **Technology:** with experience in database architecture and networking is greatly needed. We use Filemaker 5 Pro relational database software.

\* **Grant writing and foundation/corporate research:** to identify potential funding sources for TNP projects in India. This can be done from anywhere with access to the internet and a library.

\* **Legal Advise:** we need someone licensed in California to provide legal advice on policy.

\* **Endowment Development:** to help creating an endowment fund for Dolma Ling to ensure future self-sufficiency. Any experience with institutional endowment foundations would be helpful.

\* **Marketing/Public Relations:** to develop relations with and publicizing events in the media and increasing public awareness of Tibetan nuns and TNP.

\* **Photography:** We are always in need of high quality photos of the nuns supported by the Project for slide presentations, the calendar, printed informational materials, and the website.

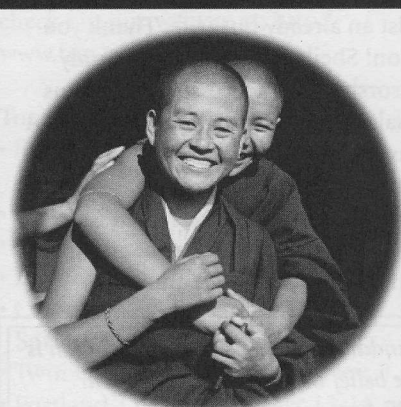
\* If you have a skill you'd like to offer that's not listed here, please contact TNP and we can explore the possibilities. Call Meg Moser at (510) 647-3423 or email: [tnpusa@igc.org](mailto:tnpusa@igc.org).

### Order Now!

## Wall Calendar 2002

*Special black and white photo edition*

6.5 x 7 in...\$10 (\$10.80 in CA only)



### Tibetan Nuns Project

Calendar 2002

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